INTRODUCTION TO

SHAKESPEARE

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- Biography (17 slides)
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• There is no record of William Shakespeare’s exact date of birth.

• He was baptized on April 26, 1564, in Stratford, England.

• Scholars put his birthday three days earlier, the 23rd.

• He attended the Stratford grammar school, but was soon needed in his father’s business.

• Shakespeare received no further education that we know of.
Birth place of William Shakespeare, Stratford upon Avon, England
In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway—he was 19; she was 27. They had three children: Susanna, and twins Hamnet and Judith.
Shakespeare entered into a period that scholars call “The Lost Years” from 1585 – 1592. Theories are that he worked for his father, became a lawyer or tutor, joined a group of traveling actors, or went to London. The truth is not known. However, by the end of 1592, Shakespeare was firmly established as an actor, and his fame as a playwright spread rapidly.
Robert Greene, an English author and contemporary of Shakespeare’s, attacked him and his writing in a pamphlet, which is one of the reasons modern scholars know that Shakespeare had already become well-known:

“Yes, trust them not, for there is an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers, that, with his Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide, supposes he is as well able to bumbast out a blanke verse as the best of you; and being an absolute Johannes Factotum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrie.”

– Robert Greene (1592)
Shakespeare’s being “an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers” indicates that Greene believes Shakespeare is false and deceiving.

The plain crow has been “beautified” by the public’s praise and “our” adulation.

“Tygers heart wrapt in a Players hide” means that while Shakespeare might be a writer, he began as a lowly actor.
• Greene states Shakespeare could write poetry ‘‘as [well as] the best of you.’’

• Anyone could write what Shakespeare wrote.

• A ‘‘Johannes Factotum’’ is literally a ‘‘Jack of all trades’’ and implies that while Shakespeare may do many things, he does none of them well.

An etching made of Robert Greene after his death